DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 814 FL 024 141

AUTHOR Sun, Hao
TITLE Pauses and Co-Construction in Chinese Peer Review Discussions.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 22p.; In: Pragmatics and Language Learning. Monograph Series Volume 6; see FL 024 134.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Chinese; College Students; Comparative Analysis; Cooperation; Discourse Analysis; English (Second Language); Higher Education; Interaction; *Interpersonal Communication; *Language Patterns; Language Research; Linguistic Theory; Native Speakers; North American English; *Peer Evaluation; *Pragmatics; *Second Languages; Suprasegmentals; Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

Using a comparative rhetoric model, a study examined the discourse behavior of native speakers of American English conducting peer review discussions in English and that of native speakers of Chinese performing the same task in Chinese. Data are drawn from audiotape recordings of peer review discussions of eight college students, conducted in college writing classes. One of the discourse features demonstrated by the native speakers of Chinese in this study is co-construction, a discourse phenomenon of collaboration. However, there is considerable difference between individual participants in the frequency of this behavior. While co-construction has been evidenced in studies of English conversation, these native speakers of American English did not manifest similar interactional behavior in their peer review discussions. Contains 21 references. (Author/MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PAUSES AND CO-CONSTRUCTION IN CHINESE PEER REVIEW DISCUSSIONS

Hao Sun

ED 399 814

Following the Comparative Rhetoric model suggested by Saville-Troike & Johnson (1994), this study examines the discourse behavior of native speakers of American English conducting peer review discussions in English and that of native speakers of Chinese performing the same task in Chinese. The analysis is based on audio-taped peer review discussions of eight college students conducted in college writing classes. One of the discourse features demonstrated by the native speakers of Chinese in this study is co-construction, a discourse phenomenon of collaboration, although there is considerable difference between individual participants in terms of frequency of such behavior. On the other hand, while co-construction has been evidenced in studies of English conversation, native speakers of American English did not manifest similar interactional behavior in their peer review discussions.

This paper describes an exploratory study in comparative discourse analysis, specifically on peer review discussions conducted in Chinese by NSs of Chinese and in English by NSs of English, comparing the use of native language by NSs across cultures for the same speech function. My general research question is whether peer review talk conducted in Chinese differs from that conducted in English and if so, in what ways. In this paper, however, I begin to explore the phenomenon of pause and co-construction in Chinese.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halliday's functional approach to language (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) provides a socio-semiotic perspective holding that language is shaped by its purposes; it is the social function that determines what language is and how it has evolved. All use of language has a context and it is the context that "determines" the text; this is extremely important for us to understand when we examine how people actually interact with each other. The context of situation, however, is only the immediate environment. There is also a broader background against which the text has to be interpreted: its context of culture. Any actual context of situation is embedded in its sociocultural environment. Halliday further posits that the relationship between text and context is a dialectical one in that the text creates context as much as the context creates the text: the content of the interaction as well as the participants all become part of the context. Discussing different approaches to the analysis of context, Goodwin and Duranti (1992) call into question the adequacy of earlier definitions of context as a set of variables. Defining context as "a socially constituted, interactively sustained, time-bound phenomenon" (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992, p. 6), the authors propose a more dynamic view of the relationship between talk and context, and between linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions of communicative events, emphasizing the examination of the process of interaction between participants.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lawrence F. Zeuten

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1987) provides a way of investigating cultural differences in conversational interaction. The assumption is that all competent individuals have two kinds of face: positive face is our self-image we wish for others to recognize and appreciate; negative face is our need for personal space--freedom from imposition. In the context of the mutual vulnerability of face, people will either try to avoid face-threatening acts (FTAs), or to minimize the threat by employing certain strategies. The need to attend to both one's own face and that of others, Brown and Levinson claim, seems to be a universal principle operating in all human societies although the content of face will differ in different cultures (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Examining Brown and Levinson's theory of face in the light of the Japanese language and culture, Matsumoto (1988) challenges the universality of the constituents of the notion of face. Matsumoto (1988) argues that the notion of negative face is alien to Japanese culture because to defend one's own territory from encroachment is not a primary concern for the Japanese; instead, a person's position in relation to others in the group and his/her acceptance by others are of significance to individuals.

There is a saying in Chinese culture: "sincere and helpful advice may be harsh sounding but is beneficial to your behavior; effective medicine may taste bitter yet it will do your health good." From this analogy, we can see that sincere advice is expected to be unpleasant in Chinese society and, as it is meant for the good of the listener, the advisee should take the advice with great appreciation. This might be part of the reason why the way Chinese speakers offer advice seems to be more straight forward (with less sugar-coating) to Americans. Furthermore, the concern for negative face seems to be less relevant in the traditional Chinese society because individual rights and privacy are of much less significance.

Gumperz (1982) demonstrates that speakers of different languages or from different ethnic backgrounds may have different conventions in discourse structure and strategies. There are also differing cross-cultural schemata of interpretation and expectation regarding the appropriate and expected conduct of interaction. Communication might break down or result in misunderstanding due to different ways of speaking, i.e., linguistic conventions or contextualization cues. Speakers of Indian English, for example, may differ with respect to conversation control devices and thematic progression. Gumperz points out that certain ethnic stereotypes are largely the result of use of one's own pattern of discourse to judge others.

In her work on discourse analysis, Tannen (1984) provides us with evidence of different styles of talk among friends and the impact on their interaction and their interpretation of each other's intent. What is important is "not only what you say, but how you say it" (p. 2). "The fact that people understand each other's ways of signaling meaning is in itself proof of shared background and context," "a metamessage of rapport" (p. 27). On the other hand, different styles of talk can create misunderstanding in communication. Tannen further argues, however, that style is not absolute; it is "context-sensitive" depending on who is speaking to whom in what situation.

In discourse studies, the phenomena of co-construction, or joint production of sentences, has received attention among researchers and conversational analysts (eg. Falk, 1980;

Ferrara, 1992; Lerner, 1991; Ochs et. al, 1979). Co-construction refers to utterances that are initiated by one speaker and completed or extended by another speaker in a syntactically and semantically consistent manner (Ferrara, 1992), reflecting the collaborative nature of conversation. It should be noted, however, that a considerable amount of the data on co-construction in English seems to be collected from settings of psychotherapeutic discourse. Observations and analysis of talks in other settings and context will enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of co-construction and the context in which it occurs.

On cross-cultural pragmatics, Wierzbicka (1991) discusses different cultural priorities and the manifestation of these values in communication. Comparing Japanese culture with American culture, Wierzbicka states that interdependence in Japan is valued more highly than autonomy. One example illustrating such a principle is conversational convention. Utterances, according to Mizutani, are expected to be "a collective work of the speaker and the addressee" (Mizutani, 1987, p.27, cited in Wierzbicka, 1991) and one of the Japanese conversational politeness conventions is to leave some sentences unfinished so that the addressee can complete them. Wierzbicka's argument here is that Japanese conversational style is more interdependent than that of Americans, and in Japanese discourse, the completion of utterances by the addressee indicates their value of interdependence.

The study by Ono & Yoshida (1995, in press), however, reports findings that offer little support for Mizutani's claim. Co-construction in Japanese conversation, Ono & Yoshida argue, is quite rare; the co-construction cases in the Japanese data seem to suggest the importance of an individual factor rather than to indicate a cultural pattern. The authors propose that there are actually pragmatic concerns as well as syntactic features that constrain the use of co-construction in Japanese. Syntactic features include post position, a verb-final construction, and the fact that the main clause always follows the subordinate one. With regard to pragmatics, the concern for "private territory" is a major factor which is responsible for the rarity of co-construction in Japanese. In conclusion, the authors suggest that Japanese speakers rarely collaborate at the syntax level in conversation; they do so through frequent backchannels and repeating part of what is produced by the first speaker.

A distinction is often made by discourse analysts between transactional and interactional talk. "Transactional talk is for getting business done in the world" while "interactional talk... has as its primary functions the lubrication of the social wheels..." (McCarthy, 1991, p. 136). On the other hand, McCarthy points out that talks rarely consist strictly of one or the other, as the borders between the two are often blurred. It seems that some features of Chinese discourse are directly related to the distinction between transactional and interactional talk.

Analyzing Chinese discourse features, Scollon and Scollon (1991) argue that the "distinction between inside and outside relationships governs speaking rights and the introduction of topics so that there are actually two separate cultural patterns" (1991, p. 118). The former refers to relatives or friends whereas the latter stands for temporary contacts that are utilitarian and last only briefly, such as business encounters in a bank or a post office. While it is true that Chinese people prefer to introduce their subject or main points after background statements have been made, that is not necessarily true in interaction in outside relationships. For example, in the case of a ticket office or post office conversational exchange, there is no small talk at the beginning and little verbal exchange

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

is actually expected, thus revealing significant differences between inside and outside relationships in discourse patterns.

A few studies in the past years have informed us of some aspects that are likely to incur potential miscommunication between Chinese learners of English and native speakers of English. Young (1982) points out that one important rule in Chinese discourse is that definitive summary statements of main arguments are delayed until the end rather than presented at the very beginning, a pattern that native English speakers find difficult to follow. As to why such sequential organization patterns are used in Chinese discourse, one interpretation offered by Young (1982) is that they represent non-confrontational styles, while Saville-Troike & Johnson (1994) state that many NSs of Chinese are more likely to attribute the appeal to "logical" need. As a NS of Chinese, I see validity in both interpretations; they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is, rather, the nature of the interaction (transactional vs. interactional) that tends to underline the significance of different strategies. In formal contexts, for example, the logical appeal might be more important. Yet the avoidance of confrontation is of primary concern in interpersonal relationships. What is essential is that we need to be aware of the distinction between two types of social interaction: those involving inside vs. outside relationships.

In her studies of non-native English-speaking teaching assistants, Tyler, Jeffries, and Davies (1988) proposed that the perception of incoherence might be better understood as the cumulative result of interacting miscues at the discourse level (syntactic incorporation, lexical discourse markers, tense/aspect etc). Tyler and Bro (1992) conducted a study asking NSs of English to rate the comprehensibility of discourse in English produced by NSs of Chinese from Young's study. They reported that the results provide strong empirical support for the claims of Tyler, Jeffries and Davies (1988) that for Americans, much difficulty in comprehension is due to the "lack" of discourse-structuring cues, or "presence of miscues," from the perspective of NSs of American English.

Corroborating the observation of Tyler, Jeffries and Davies (1988), Scollon (1993) reports results of a study of conversation in English by a NS of Chinese which shows that there is a higher frequency of conjunctions and some of them are used in ambiguous contexts. It is these functionally misplaced conjunctions that are most likely to give rise to misinterpretation and a sense of incoherence.

Reporting on an investigation of the politeness strategies used by Americans and Chinese subjects improvising the same situation in their respective native languages, Nash (1983) argues against the classification of cultures into politeness types, for example, that the U.S. is a positive politeness culture. Instead, Nash suggests that politeness strategies are more situation-specific. It is shown in his study that American subjects relied heavily on the negative politeness strategy of hedging, whereas the Chinese subjects utilized positive politeness such as showing concern for and interest in the addressee. This does not mean, however, that such a pattern will be evident in all situations and all discourse performances because the concept and content of face may vary from culture to culture. Nash's study here seems to suggest that it might not be appropriate for us to analyze discourse with a dichotomy of positive vs. negative politeness strategies, at least not in the case of Chinese discourse for two reasons: first, the concept of freedom from imposition as is embraced in

negative politeness actually may not be an issue of magnitude in the Chinese society due to its long history of feudalism and hierarchical social structure; secondly, the "inside" relationship in the study may have been crucial in terms of the results.

There are also a number of studies conducted with regard to peer review. Johnson and Yang (1990) show evidence that both NSs and NNSs writing in English took into consideration interpersonal and ideational functions in constructing effective peer review and they employed similar politeness strategies to minimize FTAs. The NNSs produced reviews that were equivalent to those of the NSs with regard to effectiveness and appropriateness. They also employed politeness strategies in similar ways. There were differences, however, in the use of grammatical and lexical means for most of the NNSs which exemplified their less proficient use of English in the discourse of peer review. The most striking difference between the two groups though lies in the giving of deference. The NNSs tended to make more explicit references to power factors, suggesting their lack of knowledge of the content of their partner's paper when they made suggestions.

RESEARCH METHOD

Design

This study followed the non-deficit model of comparative rhetoric suggested by Saville-Troike and Johnson (1994). Saville-Troike and Johnson (1994) propose that analysis of comparative rhetoric can be enriched by incorporating an ethnography of communication perspective. Comparative rhetoric, the authors suggest, takes as its primary analytic task describing and accounting for similarities and differences in patterning within different speech communities. Therefore, it is important to incorporate internal perspectives which can significantly enhance validity of interpretation. This research involved a qualitative comparison of sociolinguistic behavior of NSs of Chinese conducting peer review discussions in Chinese and NSs of English carrying out the same activity in English. The analysis is based on audio taped peer review discussions of eight students conducted in college writing classes. I was teaching one of the classes.

Peer review in composition classes for international students is usually conducted in English in accordance with instructional goals as well as students' needs. In this sense, the use of the Chinese language for peer discussion is somewhat unusual from an instructional perspective. However, as this study is about comparative discourse, the use of Chinese is essential. I also assumed that between NSs of the same language, using their L1 to converse would not be unnatural; it may even be more comfortable for some participants and this turned out to be true.

Participants

There were 8 participants in my study: one male and three female Chinese, and two male and two female Americans. They were all undergraduates enrolled in the first semester freshmen composition course at the University of Arizona, the American students in English 101 and the Chinese students in English 107. Two of the Chinese participants were from one

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

class that I was teaching while the other two were from another section of the same course. All the participants had experienced peer review by the time their conversations were recorded but the Chinese students were only introduced to the task in English writing classes in the U.S.

Task

The participants conducted peer reviews in class while their discussions were tape recorded. Having exchanged the drafts of their essays with their partners in their respective classes, the participants then read through their peers' composition, and proceeded afterwards to share orally both positive comments and constructive criticism with their peers about the essay they read. Of the three instructors (including myself) involved in this study, two of them had specific questions for the review discussion while one instructor just gave general instructions to give each other feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Procedure

Tape recording was done during normal class time in a separate room while students were discussing each other's papers after reading the drafts of their assigned essays. All the participants were informed that I was recording their talk for my research, but the focus of my study was intentionally not specified in the hope that their performance would be affected as little as possible.

After the data were collected, I made transcripts following the transcription conventions of Tannen (1984) and then translated the Chinese peer review discussions into English. I also interviewed some of the participants in order to obtain participants' explanation for their discourse behavior as well as to corroborate my interpretation of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Upon comparing the transcripts, I found some interesting differences as well as similarities between the two language groups. For the data in Chinese, the use of pauses, incomplete sentences and joint constructions seem to be one of the most salient characteristics compared with my English data. In the peer review discussion, Chinese speakers sometimes pause within a sentence, and then the interlocutor completes the sentence in such a way that it is both syntactically and semantically consistent.

My discussion will be presented in the following order: pauses and co-construction, incomplete sentences, possible explanations, the context: with whom and when, pauses and co-construction in comparison, and conclusion.

Pauses and Co-Construction

Based on the Chinese data, the pauses that occurred can be classified into three categories which I will discuss below. The first type of pause can be illustrated in the following example.

We can see in (1) that speaker J paused after "are more likely", which was completed by speaker A's "to happen maybe". For the sake of analysis, let's label this kind of pause as pause type I (PI) which appears to be the result of the speaker's deliberation of proper word(s). This seems to be similar to the classification of the third type of joint production by Ferrara (1992) --"helpful utterance completions" (p. 220), which refers to "minimal additions offered by a listener who detects some difficulty on the part of a speaker in accessing an item in the mental lexicon" (p. 220). However, while Ferrara's taxonomy is structured around joint production, my analysis here uses pauses as the focus because I intend to cover both the pause and the completion of the sentence.

(1)

1 J 第一个 我觉得 题目 选得 很好, 因为 这种,
first I feel topic chose well because this kind
First, I think that you've chosen a good topic, because this,

2 这种, 这种 事情 年轻人 特别
this kind this kind matter young people particularly
this this kind of thing, especially to young people, is

3 会 发生 嗯 发生这种事情
likely happen yeah happen this kind matter
more likely... to happen, yeah, to happen

4 A 好象特别 会 发生
seem particularly likely happen
seem more likely to happen

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A somewhat different type of pause seems to be evident in the discussion between speaker C and L in (2).

(2)

1 L 这篇文章 我觉得不 很 好 写。 虽然 资料
this piece article I feel not very easy write though materials
This article I feel it's not easy to write. Though there

2 很多 可是
a lot but
are lots of materials, but

3 C 不 知 怎么写
not know how write
don't know how to write it

4 L 对 对, 又要 argue 又要 用 另一种
right right, also need argue also need use another kind
right right, we need to argue, we also need to write

5 C 太多了
too much
too much.

6 L language 写的话, 可能
language write maybe
if in another language, maybe

7 C 就 困难 一点.
then difficult a little
it's more difficult

Here, speaker L (male) started by mentioning that "though there are many materials", and then he paused after "but". Speaker C (female) finished his sentence with "don't know how to write it", which seems to be a logical completion as confirmed by L's next utterance "Right". Likewise, L paused after "maybe" in the same conversation which was followed by C's "it's more difficult."

For the sake of differentiation, I will categorize these pauses as pause type II which occurred at the juncture of a clause. These pauses were not taking place before a certain "searched-for" word; rather, they preceded almost a whole sentence or clause. This is extremely interesting because the fact that most of the sentence has not yet been uttered makes the inference of the unspoken part much more difficult. Surprisingly, C was able to

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

complete both utterances and L confirmed that she had conjectured correctly with "right" in both cases. Judging from the context, we can see this type of pause does not derive from pondering over the choice of a word; rather, it is related to the whole sentence.

Analyzing the syntactic properties of joint construction of a sentence, Lerner (1991) discusses in detail the foreshadowing of the structure of "if" at the beginning of a speaker's utterance in English which projects the second component in the sentence. Here, in the Chinese case, the word *though* in (2) line 1 has the same property as the English *if* in the sense of foreshadowing. In Chinese, the word *though* is always placed at the beginning of a sentence, unlike in English. Furthermore, contrary to the English rule, it requires the presence of *but* in the following portion of the sentence. Therefore, the word *though*, an adversative conjunction in Chinese, naturally orients a listener syntactically and semantically in the sense that what follows in the latter part of the utterance becomes more or less predictable. Example (2) discussed above seems to serve as a good example of such foreshadowing. It makes the co-construction at the clausal level possible.

The third type of pause is different from the first two not so much because of its syntactic position but because of its purpose and function. It seems that pauses in this category serve as indicators of forthcoming criticism, expressions of hesitation, or even unwillingness to critique, and possibly invitations for completion of the utterance by the addressee. The next example (3), which, interestingly enough, contains three pauses, illustrates pauses of this type.

(3)

1 L: 你 现在 没有想法的话， 那 人家 就会看 你 这
you now no have thoughts then others would read your this
If you don't have your own opinions, then others reading your paper

2 文章 ..... 嗯，这是一个，
essay ... yeah this is one
would feel eh, this is one point

3 A: 没有什么
have nothing
at a loss

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

还有 一个就是 我就是觉得 你那个 叙述性
still have one just is I just is feel you that narrative
Another thing that is, I feel there's... not enough narrative

的东西不多了，因为 它叫 narrative 啊， 主要是
thing too little because it call narrative ah mainly is
in your paper. Because it's called narrative, mainly

yeah
yeah
yeah

讲 叙述 就是 通过 叙述 来说明你的
speak narrative just is through narrative explain your
It's narrative that means you express your opinion through

观点 说明 一件事 或一个人，
opinion explain one event or one person
narration your opinion about a person or an event

A: uh huh uh huh
uh huh uh huh
Uh huh, uh huh.

对 对
right right
Right, right.

其实 你 这 里头 材料 还 是有，
actually you this inside material still is have
Actually you have quite a lot of ideas in your essay

不过你就 等于 没有
but you just almost not
but it's just like you didn't

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

没有把它
not it
didn't make it

4 { 点明。 我想是这样，
explicit I think is this way
explicit I think that's it

15 J { 讲清楚 对， 我看 是能
say clear right I read is can
make it clear Right I can still

{ 看懂， 也 可能 因为 我们 { 有 一样的文化，
understand also maybe because we have same culture
understand perhaps because we share the same culture
对， 我们自己 懂
right we ourselves understand
Right, we ourselves understand

[illegible] 只是觉 我不 也许可能 别人 会 会觉得
But I just feel maybe others would would feel
But I feel maybe others would would feel
对，要是外国人看
right if foreigner read
Right, if foreigners read it

[illegible] 嗯
Yeah
Yeah

[illegible] 对，还有就是象你讲的我没有说自己的感受，
[illegible] is like you say I not have say self feeling
Right And like you said I didn't express how I felt.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In (5), speaker J was trying to give more positive comments, but she couldn't think of what to say, so J left the sentence incomplete on line 3: "I don't know if others…" Though incomplete, the meaning here is clear: your writing may not be effective for others. It seems to be a politeness tactic. What is worth noting is that the listener does not seem to be bothered or confused by the absence of the rest of the utterance; no questions were asked. Therefore, we might perceive incomplete sentences as an acceptable phenomenon in Chinese discourse: it is the listener who is left to make inferences. I assume that it might even be considered rude or unwise in Chinese discourse to pursue clarifications when the speaker intentionally leaves the sentence incomplete.

Possible Explanations

Why do these Chinese speakers pause within sentences, and what functions do these pauses achieve? One reason for such pauses might be the structure of language. During my talk with speaker A, when asked what she thought might be possible reasons for the pauses in the data, she mentioned that maybe in Chinese discourse, especially with people we are familiar with, we may not have thought out everything carefully before we actually start to talk. As a result, during the process we need to pause and think more. If this is the case, the discourse phenomenon is then related to the structure of the Chinese language. As topic-comment structure is quite common in Chinese, interlocutors sometimes start the conversation with just a topic and then pause after the topic in order to plan what he/she wants to say as well as to provide the listener with time for processing information and comprehension. The need for pause might then be partly accounted for by the topic-comment structure of Chinese. But this is only a supposition; we need more empirical evidence to show the validity of such a claim. As the focus of my study here is on pauses and co-construction, I will not examine the pauses following topics in discourse in this paper.

The second possible explanation for pauses in the taped peer review discussions seems to be politeness considerations. A close look at example (3) enables us to identify the critical location of pauses and consequently, the purposes: all three pauses by speaker J occurred before utterances containing FTAs. Particularly in both the first and the last cases, the pauses occurred immediately before the key word or phrase which conveyed speaker J's opinion of the weakness or problem in speaker A's paper. Therefore, it is likely that the reason J paused is that she was giving A a hint, or a friendly warning about the forthcoming FTAs so that the listener would be prepared for what was about to come. In her interview, J also mentioned that because she was trying to verbalize criticism, she wanted to be careful in choosing the right words, thus the pauses. Moreover, with a pause, in reality, the speaker was giving her interlocutor an opportunity to volunteer to express those "harsh" words. In this way, the job of "finding fault" was taken care of and the speaker would not have to risk "hurting" her partner. The result of both the first and last pause in example 3 was that the listener did voluntarily complete speaker J's unfinished utterances: for the first pause, A came up with "at a loss", which was actually a criticism of her own weakness in her paper. For the third pause, A again latched onto what J said, though she did not finish it either. Indeed, J succeeded here in avoiding giving a direct statement of criticism, yet her message was clear to A. Apparently, in the case of the Chinese peer review discussions analyzed here, hesitation signals the presence of FTAs, as is manifested in the pauses. Furthermore, pauses also seem to function as a means to mitigate face threatening acts.

The third possible reason for pauses might be a discourse convention. In my interview with speaker A & J, the two Chinese women whose peer review discussions were part of my data, both of them commented that it was quite common among NSs of Chinese to pause and to complete the speaker's unfinished sentence in conversation. A commented, "If I don't respond to the speakers's pause, it gives the impression that either I am not being attentive or not showing understanding. Sometimes it can also be awkward if you as a listener do not come in and help when the speaker is searching or pausing for words." For native speakers of Chinese then, pauses may be invitations for co-construction, chances to demonstrate support, understanding, solidarity and enthusiasm. All of these, in a sense, bear some resemblance to the function of minimal response discussed in the literature on gender and language.

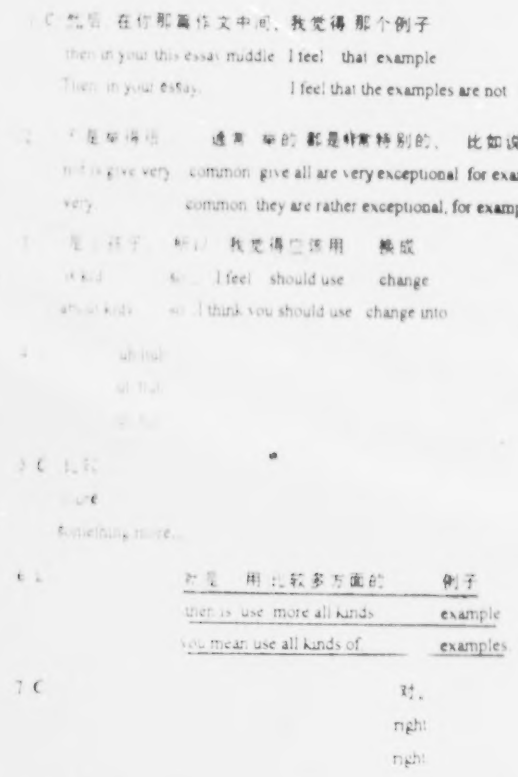
A final aspect that we should take into consideration is Chinese culture: it is highly valued in traditional Chinese culture to be implicit and subtle; therefore, discourse practice might reflect the expectation to be implicit. It is generally acknowledged that the better you know your friends, the less you will need to verbalize your thoughts in order to communicate; that is, using fewer words or being implicit is an indication of the degree of intimacy. We even have an idiom that emphasizes the value of silence: "silence at this moment communicates better than verbal expression." It is particularly relevant in contexts of intimate relationships when words are deemed insufficient to express our strong feelings.

The Context: With Whom and When

Though pauses are not uncommon in my data, they differ from one speaker to another in frequency and type, with speaker J showing most frequency (18 pauses compared to C's 3 and L's 5), regardless of pause types. In terms of co-construction, speaker A completed her partner's sentences more than any other participant in the study. Obviously, individual and personality factors plays an important role in sociolinguistic behavior, but there are also other factors involved such as role relation and social distance considerations. Moreover, in the Chinese context, age is a significant element affecting social and linguistic behavior. In my interview with speaker A, she mentioned that the more familiar the participants are with each other or the shorter the social distance between them, the more likely and frequently she would "cut in", showing rapport and enthusiasm in completing others' comments. "With my friends, I wouldn't have to worry about their thinking of me as rude because we all know each other well. But with my parents or teacher, I wouldn't do that. I will listen till they finish to show respect and to maintain the distance."

It is also interesting to examine the interaction in (6).

(6)



Now it is the female speaker C talking. She had four pauses altogether in her whole utterance, yet it was only at the fourth one that the male speaker responded when he said, "you mean use all kinds?" Here, L's completion seems to be as logical as C's completions, but the fact that L did not respond to C's other three pauses is worth exploring.

What might be the explanations for L's not responding to C's first three pauses? One possibility is that he was not able to make inferences because C's intended meaning was not clear yet. This might account for his lack of response to the pauses on line 2 and line 3. This does not seem to be a logical explanation, however, for the third pause, because it was not difficult for L to predict what C was trying to say. An alternative explanation could be that L did not want to show he was eager to complete C's utterance, or that L did not agree with C completely and therefore he refused to respond to the pause.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

As I only have one male participant in my data, I am unable to observe possible variance between men and women regarding pauses and co-construction. From this preliminary study, two out of the three women tended to complete the other's utterance much more frequently and actively than the man, while one woman had four times as many pauses as the other two. It is difficult, and unwise, to account for the difference based on the limited data and the small number of participants. Ferrara's study (1992) based on therapeutic discourse, however, suggests neither gender nor role asymmetry in joint production of discourse. It would be interesting to examine the effect of gender on joint production in Chinese.

The Chinese data on pauses and co-construction have provided us with some empirical evidence of the existence of the phenomenon in Chinese discourse, but it does not enable us to arrive at generalizations as to how typical this discourse behavior is for other, or most, Chinese speakers; nor do we know how frequent these interlocutors manifest pauses and co-construction in other situations. In fact, it would be helpful to examine the particular context of peer review and identify characteristics which might have contributed to the occurrence of pauses and co-construction.

It is interesting to note that a considerable amount of data on co-construction is based on studies of therapeutic discourse in English. "Data from psychotherapy are particularly relevant because the setting calls for concerted purpose and the establishment of rapport, conditions which appear to foster joint action" (Ferrara, 1992, p. 208). If the establishment of rapport is one of the primary goals of therapeutic discourse, peer review discussion shares with it the feature of rapport maintenance, even if there is little else in common between the two speech events.

In peer review, students in the same class carry out the task of reading and responding to each other's draft. Because these students are classmates who maintain repeated contact, it is possible that they will be more concerned with rapport building than participants in other situations where there is less contact. In addition, the nature of the peer review task--giving feedback and offering criticism--implies some FTAs. It therefore makes participants more concerned about rapport building, and calls for the politeness tactics on the part of the participants which are discussed in peer review literature (eg. Johnson & Yang, 1990). We should also remember that these participants were reviewing each other's essays, so they were playing the same dual role: as readers and writers. This shared role will naturally enhance their empathy and understanding of each other and their understanding of the difficulties they encounter in the process of writing. Moreover, in the case of the Chinese participants in the ESL freshman composition classes, there may be another contributing factor: the fact that they speak the same native language may enhance the feeling of closeness between the interlocutors, and they may have considered each other belonging to the in-group, of inside relationship. The manifestation of co-construction might be partly accounted for by their perceived intimate relationship, or special affinity to each other, in a class of peers with different ethnic backgrounds. In short, a number of factors might have resulted in the need for empathy, understanding and rapport building in the context of peer review discussion.

Pauses and Responses to Pauses in Comparison

The word "response" might sound odd to readers here as pauses are not usually supposed to be responded to. I choose the word purposely, however, for I believe that pauses, in addition to serving the need for the speaker to think during conversation, may be perceived as a kind of indicator calling for feedback in Chinese conversation. Participants may have that understanding and expectation although further empirical support is required to validate the argument.

Is the phenomenon of pauses and co-construction typical of Chinese discourse? As this is only a pilot study on a very small scale, this question would be difficult to answer until more studies are conducted. What is obvious from the data here is that this is certainly an aspect of discourse worth further investigation. It might surprise the reader to note that within the whole speech event, three out of four speakers used pauses within the sentence, ranging from 3 (C), 5 (L), to 14 (J). At the same time, all four NSs of Chinese completed his/her partner's sentence at least once (speaker J and L), particularly with Speaker A. Based on the manifestation of pauses and co-construction by different speakers in my data, it would be erroneous to perceive this phenomenon of jointly-constructed discourse as simple coincidence.

By comparing my Chinese data with the English data, I intended to find out how similar or different the conversation styles were with regard to the use of pauses and responses (although I had no idea what I was looking for precisely when I recorded the conversations). Do American students pause as often? Where do they pause? How do their partners respond? Listening to the taped discussions, I found that the speed at which NSs of American English spoke seemed to be faster than that of NSs of Chinese. There were also fewer pauses within sentences. More importantly, the way the Chinese participants reacted to their partners' pauses does not seem to bear much resemblance to reactions in the peer discussions of the American students.

In example (7), there is one pause but there is no response from the listener.

(7)

1.R: If it's anything John F [Kennedy, everybody just
2.K: [I know, it's like I know,
3. Kennedy is like... no matter what he] says,
4.R:] right, it's always
5. good, it's always Right.
6.K: it's guaranteed.

(8)

1.D: It was like... [but it wasn't... it wasn't really clear.
2.W: [You weren't sure?

For example (8), we do see some interaction taking place. Here, D paused twice, and she seemed to be searching for words (words for criticism actually). Her partner W made an utterance in response to the pause and it seems to offer us two points for consideration: first, it happened to overlap with D's second attempt of expressing herself, which might suggest that D did not exactly anticipate W's response. Secondly, "You weren't sure?" is a sentence on its own, unlike some of the Chinese versions of joint construction of discourse presented earlier which would be part of a sentence that would fit into, or complete, the speaker's unfinished utterance. If W had actually said "unclear" or some other words, it would share more similarity with the Chinese data, but a whole sentence of "You weren't sure" is certainly quite different.

(9) (Reading from the guideline questions for peer review from the instructor)

1.D: Were we unbiased? Sometimes you can tell you're really ... [into it.
2.W: [like against it?
3.D: You're really against it.

Example (9) provides us with the closest counterpart from the English data to the pause and joint construction phenomenon we discussed for the Chinese data. Apparently W here was trying to respond and help D express herself, but it is worth noting that his "like against it" was only uttered after D's "into" was half way through. It might be that he was trying to help, but did not want to appear rude by interrupting or to appear imposing. In addition, D did not seem to anticipate W's utterances either.

The data in my study seem to have profiled different pictures of the use of pauses and joint production of sentences by native speakers of American English and native speakers of Chinese. For the Chinese speakers, pauses occurred more often within a sentence and joint productions were more common. Native speakers of American English did not manifest similar discourse behavior in a similar setting. One factor that might, or might not, have contributed to the difference between the two language groups is that the peer review discussions in English were conducted by cross-gender pairs, i.e. between a man and a woman, while the peer reviews in Chinese were between a man and a woman in one case and two women in the second case. Although an attempt was made to make the pairs in both language groups as comparable as possible, there was only one male Chinese student in the classes being studied. It is not clear, however, to what extent the differences regarding pauses and co-construction between the two population groups evidenced in this study reflect the cultural discourse behavior of each speech community in general, i.e., American English and Mandarin Chinese.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONCLUSION

The small number of participants on which my data is based compels me to be very cautious about my findings with respect to the comparison of discourse behavior between native speakers of Chinese and native speakers of American English. It would be hasty and premature to attempt to offer any conclusions at this point. What is obvious, though, is that co-construction, a discourse feature studied in American English, also seems to be evident in Chinese discourse, perhaps even more prominent, as is manifested in the peer review study here. Further investigations in different contexts and among participants of different role relationships in different speech communities would enable us to gain further insight into the phenomenon; such studies would also inform and benefit second or foreign language teaching in a significant way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Muriel Saville-Troike and Donna M. Johnson for their encouragement and their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I also appreciate the helpful comments by the Editors and an anonymous reviewer. Special thanks go to all the students who participated in this study.

THE AUTHOR

Hao Sun is a Ph.D. student in the Interdisciplinary Program of Second Language Acquisition and Teaching at the University of Arizona. Her research interests include Chinese sociolinguistics, comparative discourse analysis, and cross-cultural communication.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

1. "..." indicates pause
2. " " indicates two people speaking at the same time
3. " " indicates the second utterance latched onto the first one without perceptible pause
4. "__" indicates co-construction

[The transcription conventions are based on Tannen (1984), with the exception of the last one, which is based on Ferrara (1992).]

REFERENCES

Brown, P. & S. Levinson. (1987) *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Falk, J. (1980) The conversational duet. *Berkeley Linguistics Society 1980* (pp. 507-514). Berkeley: University of California.

Ferrara, K. (1992) The interactive achievement of a sentence: joint productions in therapeutic discourse. *Discourse Processes* 15, 207-228.

Goodwin, C. & A. Duranti. (1992) Rethinking context: an introduction. In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (eds.), Rethinking context (pp.1-42). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gumperz, J.J. (ed.). (1982) *Language and social identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. & R. Hasan. (1985) *Language, context and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Geelong, Victoria, Australia: Deakin University. (Reprinted 1989, Oxford University Press.)

Johnson, D.M. & A.W. Yang (He). (1990) Politeness strategies in peer review texts. *Pragmatics and language learning*, 1, 99-114.

Lerner, G.H. (1991) On the syntax of sentences-in-progress. *Language in Society* 20, 441-458.

Macarthy, M. (1991) *Discourse analysis for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matsumoto, Y. (1988) Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12, 403-426.

Nash, T. (1983) An instance of American and Chinese politeness strategy. *RELC*, 14, 87-98.

Ochs, E., B. Schieffelin, & M. Platt. (1979) Propositions across utterances and speakers. In E. Ochs & B. Schieffelin (eds.), *Developmental pragmatics* (pp.251-268). New York: Academic.

Ono, T. & E. Yoshida. (in press) A study of Co-Construction in Japanese: We don't "finish each other's sentences." To appear in *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 5.

Saville-Troike, M. & D.M. Johnson. (1994) Comparative rhetoric: An integration of perspectives. *Pragmatics and language learning* monograph series, 5, 231-246.

Scollon, R. & S.B.K. Scollon. (1991) Topic confusion in English-Asian discourse. *World Englishes*, 10(2), 113-125.

Scollon, R. (1993) Cumulative Ambiguity: Conjunctions in Chinese-English intercultural communication. *Perspectives: Working papers of the Department of English*. Hong Kong: City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, 5(1), 55-73.

Tannen, D. (1984) *Conversational Style: analyzing talk among friends*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Tyler, A.E., A.A. Jeffries, & C.E. Davies. (1988) The effect of discourse structuring devices on listener perceptions of coherence in non-native university teacher's spoken discourse. *World Englishes*, 7(2), 101-110.

Tyler, A. & J. Bro. (1992) Discourse structure in nonnative English discourse. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 14, 86.

Wierzbicka, A. (1991) *Cross-cultural pragmatics: The semantics of human interaction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Young, L.W. (1982) Inscrutability revisited. In J.J. Gumperz (ed.), *Language and social identity* (pp.72-84). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.